

Claims

1. A system for use with one or more interactive television networks for providing television programs to users having television set top boxes, the system comprising:

a plurality of client applications, each running on a set top box with each application providing a user interface that allows users to receive information and to input information;

a commerce transfer point in communication with a number of the client applications, the commerce transfer point receiving information entered by the user and providing product information to the client application for display to the user; and

a commerce control point having memory and in communication with one or more commerce transfer points for maintaining product information and information about users.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising at least one more commerce transfer point in communication with a plurality of client applications and with the commerce control point.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the commerce transfer point receives requests from client applications, processes the requests, and provides messages to the client applications, the commerce transfer point having a real-time queue for queuing requests from client applications with a higher response priority, a batch queue for queuing requests from client applications with a lower response priority, and a plurality of database programs for processing the requests first from the real-time queue and then from the batch queue.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the commerce transfer point stores information associating products and programming, wherein the client application is executed in response to a user input during programming, the client application displaying product information associated with that programming.

5. The system of claim 4, further providing an interface that allows a user to enter information to purchase the product.

6. The system of claim 1, the commerce transfer point storing product information and information about users, the client application being executed in response to a user input during programming, the commerce transfer point providing different product information to the client application on execution depending on the user.

7. The system of claim 6, further providing an interface that allows a user to enter information to purchase the product.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the client application has an interface to allow users to select and save the identification of products in a list, the commerce transfer point storing the user-selected product identification, wherein on request from the user, the client application causing the product identifications associated with the particular user to be retrieved from the commerce transfer point and displayed.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the commerce transfer point resides in the cable head end of a widely available cable television system.

10. A system for use with one or more interactive television networks for providing television programs to users having television set top boxes, the system comprising:

- a plurality of client applications, each running on a set top box with each application providing a user interface that allows users to receive and input information;

- a database; and

- a commerce transfer point in communication with the client applications and the database, the commerce transfer point providing product information from the database to the client application for display to the user, wherein the commerce transfer point

receives requests from client applications, processes the requests, and provides messages to the client applications, the commerce transfer point including:

a real-time queue for queuing requests with a higher response priority,
a batch queue for queuing requests with a lower response priority, and
a plurality of database programs for processing the requests first from the real-time queue and then from the batch queue.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the commerce transfer point stores information associating products and programming, wherein the client application is executed in response to a user input during programming, the client application displaying product information associated with that programming.

12. The system of claim 10, the commerce transfer point storing product information and information about users, the client application being executed in response to a user input during programming, the commerce transfer point providing different product information to the client application on execution depending on the user.

13. The system of claim 10, wherein the client application has an interface to allow users to select and save the identification of products in a list, the commerce transfer point storing the user-selected product identification, wherein on request from the user, the client application causing the product identifications associated with the particular user to be retrieved and displayed.

14. The system of claim 10, wherein the commerce transfer point resides in the cable head end of a widely available cable television system.

15. A method for use with an interactive television commerce system, the method comprising:

in response to user input, providing to the user a list of products;
maintaining a database of users; and

in response to a user selecting an item from the list, storing the item in the database and associating that item with the user, such that the user can later retrieve the saved items.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising responsive to the user retrieving the item from storage, providing to the user options including a first option to obtain information about the item, and a second option to purchase the item.

17. The method of claim 15, further comprising responsive to the user selecting the second option, providing to the user an input form for the user to enter information in the input form to purchase the item, the system further including forwarding the information to process the purchase order.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the database includes a plurality of items for at least some users.

19. The method of claim 15, wherein the television network is a widely available cable television system, the user uses an interface provided through a set top box, and the database is maintained in a persistent state at the cable head end so that the user can retrieve the information after the set top box has previously been turned off.

20. The method of claim 15, wherein the saved items are displayed in a list to the user on the television screen, the method further including displaying a detail screen such that as a user points to an item in the list, detail about that item is displayed in the detail screen.

21. A method for commerce through an interactive television system comprising:

providing product information to a user over an interactive television network separate from broadcast programming in response to a request from the user, the

interactive television network being a widely available network available to a large number of households over a wide area;

in response to an input by a user requesting to purchase a product, providing an input screen for the user to enter information;

forwarding the information to a server to cause the purchase to be transacted.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the product information that is provided includes a list of products, each of which can be purchased.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein the providing includes displaying through a user interface by a client application running on a set top box.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the displaying includes displaying a product information screen that includes a list of products and a detail window, the detail window providing information about an item when the user points to that item.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein the displaying includes displaying a product information screen that includes a list of products and video capture window for displaying programming on the television while the list of products is displayed.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising displaying a detail window for providing information about an item when the user points to that item.

27. The method of claim 23, wherein the client application provides an order status screen that provides the user with information about the status of an order made for a product by the user, the order status screen indicating whether or not a product has been shipped.

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